



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TAJIKISTAN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 20, 2008

Public Information: Virginija Morgan

Email: VMorgan@usaid.gov

<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>

PRESS RELEASE

RETURN OF TAJIK BUSINESS LEADERS FROM THE USAID - SPONSORED STUDY TOUR IN THE UNITED STATES

Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Ten of Tajikistan's most dynamic business leaders returned on February 18, 2008, from five-week internships with American businesses in Michigan. Participants lived with American families, and exchanged ideas on various types of business, including hotel management, financial consulting, auto repair, and bakery services. The trip was made possible through the USAID Community Connections program.

During their stay in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the participants met with American counterparts and had a unique opportunity to "job-shadow" their work. Some of the American businesses included well-known names such as Holiday Inn and Radisson Hotels. Smaller businesses also hosted, including a bakery, auto dealer, and a packaging company. Tajik businesspeople also met with a regional Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Corporation, and other organizations promoting small and medium business development in the U.S.

At a press conference participants shared observations on their time in the U.S. with press, USAID, and U.S. Embassy representatives. Zebunisso Solieva liked how the private and public sector complement each other in the U.S. "People in the U.S. help government. Where government fails to provide, the people contribute - for example by starting NGOs." She also remarked on the egalitarian corporate structure she found at the companies she interned at. "Organizational structures can work from the bottom, not just the top... it's something new for us." Jamshed Vafoev made a similar observation at the auto dealerships where he interned- "I liked how they respected employees... I couldn't tell who was the employee or owner, they were so friendly towards each other". Firuz Bulbulov appreciated the transparency and rule of law he witnessed. "The Board's proceedings were open to the public. It was interesting to see a system where rules work - people follow the rules".

All participants appreciated the cultural aspects of the program, in particular their American host families. Olim Gaziev found it interesting how his host family carefully watched their spending to stay in budget. Zebunisso noticed how elderly Americans stay active, and saw proof of her theory: "People must lead balanced lives- professional and personal".

All participants looked forward to perusing new ideas now they have returned home. Pulod Amirbekov brought back "very heavy books" on marketing and strategic planning. He and other group members plan on starting a business club right away. Jamshed summed up the group's five-week U.S. experience: "Already there has been an impact. I think there will be new businesses soon. This trip has impacted our lives".

Community Connections provides an important opportunity for citizens of the United States and Tajikistan to work together to address common professional challenges while expanding their social and cultural understanding. As business and professional communities of both countries rapidly become integrated, opportunities for positive relations between American people and the people of Tajikistan are increasingly important. The Community Connections Program offers community-based, three-to-five week practical trainings in the United States for business and professional organization leaders from Tajikistan.

The Community Connections Program is one of the many assistance projects implemented in Tajikistan by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on behalf of the American people. Since 1993 the American people through USAID have provided more than \$270 million in assistance programs that support economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and education systems of Tajikistan.

###